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UNCLAS ANKARA 006191

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/PRA MAZEVEDO
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: EXBS: PROBLEMS WITH BORDER SECURITY IN TURKEY

REF: STATE 183118

Sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

1. (U) Summary: Turkish MFA has requested a hold on travel to border areas under the EXBS program until the Turkish Parliament ratifies the recently signed Nonproliferation Cooperation Agreement. Following ratification, expected by the end of October, full implementation of the EXBS program, including travel to border areas, in Turkey can begin. As reflected in Embassy Ankara's Consular information sheet, no region of Turkey is off-limits to official or unofficial travel. Caution in travel to all regions is advised following the June 2004 announcement by the PKK terrorist organization that it was ending its unilateral cease fire. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The Nonproliferation Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of Turkey and the United States, signed on June 14th, awaits final ratification by the Turkish Parliament. Once this ratification is completed, all programs covered under the EXBS umbrella will be open for engagement. However, until final ratification, MFA has requested that EXBS program engagement be limited to exchanges with senior government officials in Ankara. MFA officials want to avoid the appearance that the government is beginning work before the Agreement is ratified which they expect by the end of the month. Once this is done, travel by USG officials throughout Turkey will be encouraged in order to make the program as successful as possible. Many programs are awaiting this final ratification, including the DOE Second Line of Defense and an overall Customs and Border Protection Service assessment.

3. (U) Turkish Customs, Foreign Trade and other government organizations are eager to participate in many of the EXBS programs that will be available to Turkey. They understand the importance of following established governmental procedures towards ratification of the Agreement. All Turkish agencies involved with the EXBS program are careful to ensure that any actions that they undertake within the EXBS program will not give the appearance of circumventing the ratification of the Agreement by Parliament. Each organization is ready to quickly move forward engaging their U.S. counterpart once this final step is complete.

4. (U) In response to concerns raised in reftel, post emphasizes that there are no general travel restrictions on travel throughout Turkey. Travelers must exercise caution when traveling in certain regions of the country due to periodic terrorist activity or other concerns, but overall safety is good. The border crossings with Syria, Georgia, Bulgaria and Greece are generally free of violence and safe to visit. Visits to SE Turkey, including the border crossings with Iraq and Iran, are monitored and subject to approval by the Embassy. While travel to SE Turkey requires greater vigilance, travel to this region does occur in support of specific mission goals and programs is possible.

5. (U) Questions concerning the Turkish EXBS program should be addressed to the Turkish EXBS Advisor, Kevin Lyon. His contact information is phone (90)(312)455-5555 ext 2525, fax (90)(312)468-4775, email LyonK@state.gov.

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